

VZCZCXRO8721
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHKU #1052 3081326
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 041326Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4151
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KUWAIT 001052

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/SRMC, NEA/ARP (JSAWYER), NEA/PPD (DBENZE, PAGNEW)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [ZR](#)

SUBJECT: SR PANDITH REACHES OUT TO NEXT GENERATION OF KUWAITI LEADERS

1. (U) Summary: Special Representative for Muslim Communities Farah Pandith's October 26-28 visit to Kuwait concentrated on outreach to students and young leaders active in civil society in a wide variety of ways. Throughout her visit, SR Pandith emphasized her strong interest in helping Kuwait's young people network with like-minded individuals around the world. During a meeting with the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, SR Pandith heard about the efforts of the Ministry's Center for Moderation in combating Islamic extremism. SR Pandith stressed the need for future cooperation and the exchange of information and the need to work jointly on promoting and encouraging moderation. End summary.

2. (U) During her first visit to the Middle East in her capacity as Special Representative for Muslim Communities, SR Pandith met in multiple meetings with dozens of university students and young people active in non-governmental organizations. She described the Secretary's vision for engagement with Muslim communities in the 21st century, as outlined by President Obama in his Cairo and Ankara speeches. She emphasized her mission to serve as Secretary Clinton's advisor on Muslim engagement and to work with embassies at a grassroots level. She said she will serve as the convener, facilitator and intellectual partner with civil society and will bring like-minded people together to promote and support ideas and initiatives for the common good, with a focus on the next generation. She reiterated the same goals during a luncheon with Ambassador Deborah K. Jones; Dr. Badria Al-Awadhi, a prominent female human rights lawyer; Dr. Rawda Awwad, Assistant Dean at the American University of Kuwait; and Dr. Fahed Al-Ajmi, Executive Director of the American-Kuwaiti Alliance. This approach to engagement was received positively.

3. (U) In addition to describing the goals and activities of their respective organizations, a number of the young NGO leaders and bloggers shared with SR Pandith their frustrations with what they perceive as an increase in recent years of government censorship targeting everything from imported books and DVDs to domestic blogs, art and music. Several young film makers noted their films could only be screened outside of Kuwait. (Note: Embassy Kuwait will report on the issue of censorship septel. End note). During one gathering with both liberal and conservative university students, SR Pandith offered her support to a student who expressed an interest in launching an anti-racism campaign at his university. Post and SRMC will work together to be helpful toward this effort.

4. (U) During SR Pandith's meeting at the Ministry of Awqaf's Moderation Center, Under Secretary Dr. Adel Al-Falah described the Center's efforts to study the sociological, psychological and political roots of sectarianism, tribalism and Islamic extremism, to prevent and combat such divisive and dangerous attitudes and behavior, and to promote tolerance and moderation. Dr. Al-Falah stressed that the studies had revealed that extremism was not an indigenous phenomena in Kuwaiti society but rather an exterior influence that had affected a very small number of individuals. The Center's focus had therefore shifted from trying to remedy the problem to protecting young people from the dangers of extremist thought. Dr. Al-Falah also described the Center's work in other countries, especially in the United Kingdom, Azerbaijan and Russia, where it had established similar moderation centers. Finally, he

highlighted the success of a conference, held in 2006 in Washington, D.C. and organized by the Moderation Center in conjunction with the Embassy of Kuwait, to "promote moderation and reconfirm that Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance." At the conclusion of the meeting, SR Pandith and Dr. Al-Falah agreed to exchange information on future projects and to work jointly on promoting and encouraging moderation.

¶5. (U) At a press round-table with ten journalists, SR Pandith underscored the unprecedented dedication the American government is placing on engagement with Muslims and Muslim communities around the world. She also spoke about the importance of the President's laying the foundation for "a new beginning," i.e. "mutual interest and mutual respect." She conveyed Secretary Clinton's priority in turning that vision into a reality, in part by establishing -- for the first time -- an office tasked with reaching out to Muslim communities on a people to people level. SR Pandith described her mission as engaging in dialogue, building networks, listening to the voices of young Muslims, developing ways to work together and serving as a connector for like-minded young people around the world to forge partnerships for the common good. The following day, all ten newspapers represented reported on the meeting accurately. The journalists' positive reaction and interest in this new approach was reflected in their reporting.

¶6. (U) This cable was cleared by SR Pandith.

JONES